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NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

## Navy corpsman excels at Kandahar’s NATO Role III Multi-National Medical Unit

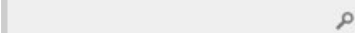
BY VJOHNSON – MAY 29, 2014

POSTED IN: FEATURES

By Staff Sgt. Whitney Houston

As a baseline standard, the military asks its personnel to be effective in whatever job they choose to do. Many meet the standard and some go above and beyond.

An example of the latter is U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Charisse Torres, hospital corpsman and X-ray technologist at the NATO Role III Multi-National Medical Unit, Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, according to both her peers and leaders. She has demonstrated versatility as a technologist by branching out into many modalities in diagnostic imaging.



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Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Charisse Torres, an X-ray tech serving with the NATO Role III Multi-National Medical Unit, shares a candid moment outside the hospital at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Torres is a valued asset to her team as she is the only person trained in the ultrasound modality. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Whitney C. Houston)

“I’m an X-ray tech here, but I have to be flexible,” Torres said. “I also do X-ray, CT (Computed Tomography), ultrasound, and fluoroscopy (live X-ray). I am the sole ultrasound technologist here.”

Torres explained that her broad base in diagnostic imaging is from on-the-job training she received during a three-year assignment in Japan at the Okinawa Naval Hospital. Back home she also serves as a mammography tech at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton.

Despite demands on her time as the sole ultrasound tech, she said she is passionate about what she does.

“I really love doing ultrasound,” she said. “The challenge is that you don’t really get any time off, because you’re the only one who knows how to do the job. But for me it doesn’t really bother me because I love what I do.”

Torres said she also shares the weight of the department’s duties through valued friendships and draws a lot of energy from their good humor.

“The friends that I have here are really important, they lighten the hard moments for me,” she said. “I love listening to their stories and they’re constantly joking around; it really keeps me going. They are so funny.”

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Torres has been in Afghanistan since January. Not only has she taken on extra duties in the imaging department, she's refining her leadership skills by dependably participating in the Navy's Chief Petty Officer program.

"The Navy's CPO program has a physical and academic curriculum that prepares you to become a chief petty officer," said Torres' supervisor, Chief Petty Officer Kevin Miller. "She is one of the rare few that has 100 percent attendance in her class."

Torres' work ethic and dedication to her line of work has given her a good reputation and a sturdy trust among her peers and leaders.



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Charisse Torres, an X-ray tech serving with the NATO Role III Multi-National Medical Unit, as she exits a patient's room with her ultrasound machine after doing an exam at the hospital Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Torres is a valued asset to her team as she is the only person trained in the ultrasound modality.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Whitney C. Houston)

"The thing I like most about Petty Officer Torres is her willingness to accept challenge," said Miller. "The op-tempo here is already high paced, yet she runs toward responsibility. She has always maintained good order and discipline. She runs the shop. I'm only here to relay support."

Part of maintaining her efficacy and zeal for her position, she imagines her patients as proxy for her family.



“I always try to think of my patients as my family members,” she said with determination in her face. “Regardless if I’m tired or if I’m not going to get any time off, I still think of them as my brother, my mom or my daughter. I feel like I’m needed here, that I need to be here right now, that I need to save lives.”

If her professional repertoire wasn’t impressive enough, it merits note that Torres was raised in Manila, Philippines, and Tagalog is her first language. She came to the U.S. knowing English when she was 19.

She soon joined the United States Navy as a corpsman after being influenced by her uncle, who also was an X-ray tech in the Navy.

“I always knew I wanted to be an X-ray tech, but doing it through the Navy has been the best thing for me,” she said.

Torres is a mother of two children: a boy and a girl, Joseph and Sophia. Joseph just turned two years old in March and Sophia will be five in July.

Although she’s absent for her children’s development and special events, she finds comfort in good family support from her parents and her husband Joneil Torres, who also happens to serve in the Navy as a Petty Officer 2nd Class in diagnostic imaging as a nuclear medicine technologist.

Torres said she bridges the distance between her and her family with the programs and technology available to her.

“To maintain familiarity with my kids I use the United Through Reading. Sailors record themselves reading books to their kids and then you mail the video to your kids, and they watch you read the books to them,” she said. “I think I’ve done close to 90 of them now, and when I Skype with my daughter she comes to me with a book and says ‘Hey mom, I’m going to read you a book,’” she said with a smile as she imitated her daughter.

Torres will finish her tour and will be able to see her daughter start kindergarten in September.



About vjohnson

- Jeannie Johnson  
BRAVO ZULU! You make the rest of us proud.HM1 Martha-jean Johnson, USN RET.